



THE MERCURY | UTMERCURY.COM

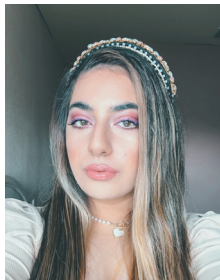
Former Comet accused of attempted murder sentenced to probation



GRACE COWGER | MERCURY STAFF

FATIMAH AZEEM
Editor-In-Chief

A former UTD student on trial for attempted murder and felony battery was sentenced to 36 months of probation on Aug. 2.



NIKA NIKOUBIN

Former administration junior Nika Nikoubin — who now goes by Nicole Nikoubin — stood trial before the Eighth Judicial District Court in Clark County, Nevada for stabbing a man on a blind date in a Las Vegas hotel in March of last year. Nikoubin attended UTD in Spring 2023 before being banned from campus in February after a Student Media staff member discovered her background and reported her to security. Clark County District Judge Carli Kierny found Nikoubin guilty of two counts of false imprisonment with a deadly weapon, both Category B felonies in the state of Nevada. Nikoubin is subject to standard

Trial Takeaways

- The defense sought 12 – 30 months of probation.

- Judge Kierny sentenced Nikoubin to 36 months of probation after the victim forgave her.

- Nikoubin must continue psychiatric treatment, complete 100 hours of community service, and meet a curfew per probation rules.

terms of probation including adhering to a 6 p.m. curfew, 100 hours of assigned community service, mandatory counseling and random drug testing. Nikoubin will continue to live with her parents in Frisco, Texas during her probation.

“In light of the circumstances surrounding this case as well as the steps that Miss Nikoubin has taken to address those circumstances, I find that a probation would be an appropriate sentence here,” Kierny said. “I hope [she] is able to stay on the continued path ... and that we never see her back here under similar circumstances.”

Nikoubin’s lawyer, Alana Bondy, sought 12-30 months of probation for Nikoubin, citing a history of adhering to house arrest

SEE **NIKA**, PAGE 11

UTD STUDENT ACES HIGH AT CHESS
Economics sophomore Ivan Schitco made history this summer after he progressed to the third round of the FIDE international chess competition - making it further than any Comet ever has.
SEE HIS HISTORIC MOMENT PAGE 3



UEMR STARTS PARADEMIC PROGRAM
EMTs gain experience in new course
SEE HOW COMETS SAVE LIVES PAGE 6



“He was fiery, he was tough in the best way possible. Terry Butterfield was the G.O.A.T.”

UTD’s longest tenured coach - Terry Butterfield - retired this summer. Assistant coach Jared Fleming, who played basketball at UTD as an undergraduate, succeeds him.

PAGE 8

Between a walk and a hard place

Starting Sept. 1, green parking will no longer be available in parking structures. Students with green passes must either upgrade to gold or orange to remain in the garages or park further away from buildings.



Orange and gold parking spaces are replacing green in parking garages to make up for the premium spaces that will be lost with building expansions.

GRACE COWGER | MERCURY STAFF

TEJAL DHAN
Managing Editor

Effective after Aug. 31, green parking permit spaces in all three parking garages on campus will no longer be available to those with a green parking pass, and instead only accessible to those with a gold parking pass or higher.

Starting mid-July, UTD Parking and Transportation began painting over green parking permit spaces in garages and lots across campus. Until Aug. 31, students with green parking can park in the spaces that were previously green in the garage. Due to planned construction such as with the Athenaeum and potential building expansions to JSOM and the McDermott Library, which will cause the loss of a projected 946 gold and orange parking spaces, green lots are being painted over with gold to make up for the lost spots and ensure premium parking spots remain close to campus. The higher costs may partially be due to debt accumulated by building parking garages, which could take around 30 years to pay off. Green parking spaces will still be available about a half a mile away from campus, or alternatively, students can upgrade to gold, which costs \$303 for September to August, or orange, which costs \$466 for September to August, to remain in the parking garages.

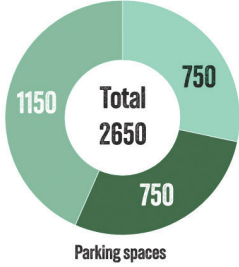
“That was a decision that we didn’t take lightly ... I reached out to my peers throughout different universities to help me figure this out, and they told me, ‘Look, we don’t have green ... our [parking] garages are premium.’” Cris Aquino, director of Parking and Transportation, said in a Staff Council meeting held on Aug.

9. “When you pay for parking, you pay for convenience for the most part ... when you pay more, you get to park closer.”

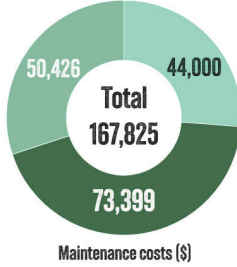
For a long time, those with green permits, the cheapest parking permit at \$169 for September to August, could manage to find a spot on the top floors of PS1, PS3 and PS4. While staff and students are impacted by this change, visitors will also have to approach parking differently. Individuals who visit UTD can purchase a one-day green parking pass, but now they will have to walk further to get to their destination.

Parking structure maintenance costs

PS1
PS3
PS4



Maintenance costs excluding debt service payments
Created with Datawrapper



OLUWASWEUN ADEYEMI | MERCURY STAFF

“I always noticed sometimes when parking last year, that some of the paint would fade and below it would reveal that a [gold] spot now used to be green, or an orange spot now used to be [gold],” finance sophomore Finlay Gaskins said. “It upsets me a bit and it feels like a school that has so many commuters should be more providing when it comes to parking spots.”

Aquino said that though the decision has not been made yet, it is possible to bring Comet Cab routes to green parking lots, allowing students to take the cabs to the center of campus during certain times of day.

“I still do think that people who pay the extremely high prices as is for green parking deserve to be able to access the buildings that already exist on campus without having to walk even further than they already do,” Peyton Lawrence, senior ATEC major and three-year long commuter, said.

Outside of permit changes in the garages, UTD parking and transportation are making a series of other upgrades and changes. The 883 East Comet Cruiser Shuttle, in partnership with DART, will now run at 15-minute intervals instead of 30, from Monday to Friday until Dec. 20. Though the additional cost per semester to run the shuttle is \$245,000, according to Aquino, DART and UTD will split the expenses 50/50.

The decision to increase the frequency of the shuttle stemmed from the steady increase in ridership, which went from 688,882 in 2022 to 1,091,497 in 2023.

Additionally, six new vehicles have been added to the Comet Cab service’s fleet, which is available free of charge to students, faculty, staff and visitors who are unable to walk across campus. A second wheelchair accessible vehicle has also been added, along with new shades for all vehicles in case of rough weather.

Currently, the Comet Cab service averages over 300 trips per month.

Lastly, Parking and Transportation has installed five new smart electric vehicle charging stations across PS1 and PS3. Each charger has two ports each, and the current proposed fee for their use is \$0.03 per minute or \$1.80 per hour starting Sept. 1. Older electric vehicle stations are being replaced with the new smart stations.

For an update on UTD’s parking debt, stay tuned for the Sept. 4 issue of The Mercury.

Crow Museum of Asian Art set to open on campus one year from now



PARTH GHUMARE | MERCURY STAFF

VAISHNAVI JOSYULA
Mercury Staff

The first phase of the Athenaeum, also known as the Crow Museum of Asian Art at UTD, is currently undergoing construction and will be open to the public on Aug. 19, 2024.

According to Senior Director Amy Hoffland, the 68,000 square foot museum located to the south of JSOM began design and construction in 2019 when the Crow family — a pioneer in Asian arts

— donated \$25 million for the construction of a new building on campus. The museum consists of art pieces including but not limited to sculptures, bronze ware, and scrolls from East, Southeast and South Asia dating from 5000 BC to the present day. Hoffland added that the museum will be open to the public for free, in accordance with the founders’ wishes.

“We most recently had a beam signing and we’re in a process now of completing the addition of the panels with the hope

of having the entire space conditioned later this fall,” said Calvin Jamison, vice president for facilities and economic development. “The first phase... will be completed [in] the spring of ’24, and actual occupancy will take place during the summer.”

The museum, which was designed by Morphosis Architects and led by principal architect Arne Emerson — also the

SEE **ATHENAEUM**, PAGE 11

UTD bolsters sports identity with Division II move, \$30 mil facility upgrade

ANDRÉ AVERION
Mercury Staff

FATIMAH AZEEM
Editor-In-Chief

UTD is set to transition to Division II sports, eyeing a July 2024 National Collegiate Athletic Association approval after a coveted invite from the Lone Star Conference.

The invitation to the LSC welcomes new opportunities for increased competition and sports scholarships for student athletes —

something they were not eligible for under Division III. All 15 of men and women’s sports will transition to the LSC upon submission of the Division II application by February 2024. The NCAA will require a three-year provisional period which will allow UTD Athletics time to hire specialized staff and implement the scholarship component before they compete for NCAA national titles. The shift to Division II comes in tandem with UTD’s \$30 million investment in a track and field complex — set to break ground next sum-

mer — and the Athletics rebranding that’s set to unveil this October, all bolstering UTD’s sports presence.

“The support has been amazing,” Director of Athletics Angela Marin said. “Our alumni are ecstatic, and I have heard from my colleagues across campus and faculty and staff members. And just to see the campus already embracing this and we haven’t done anything yet is so exciting. There’s so much to look for-

SEE **SPORTS**, PAGE 11



RAINIER PEDERSON | MERCURY STAFF



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UTDPD Blotter

- August 2

 - At 4:28 p.m., an individual was found displaying a fictitious license plate.
- August 5

 - At 8:00 p.m., an individual committed an act of physical assault.
- August 6

 - At 9:00 p.m., an individual committed indecent exposure.
- August 8

 - At an unknown time, a subject reported a theft.
- August 8

 - At 3:13 p.m., an individual was arrested for public intoxication and criminal trespass.
- August 11

 - At 8:14 a.m., an individual was arrested for possession and use of a volatile chemical.
- August 14

 - At 4:55 p.m., a subject reported a theft.
- August 15

 - At 1:30 p.m., an individual was investigated for disorderly conduct.

LEGEND

VEHICULAR INCIDENT

THEFT

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

OTHER

MAP: UTD | COURTESY



Corrections/Clarifications
Bring factual errors or inaccuracies to the attention of *The Mercury's* staff by emailing editor@utdm Mercury.com or calling (972) 883-2287 and a correction will be published in this space in a future issue.

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THE MERCURY

IF YOU FEEL SOME TYPE OF WAY ABOUT THIS LAYOUT

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Chess player makes history in global contest

Grandmaster Ivan Schitco entered into the World FIDE cup, where the world's best chess players compete

AAFIYA ASLAM
Mercury Staff

Economics sophomore and Grandmaster Ivan Schitco qualified to play for the World FIDE Cup 2023 from July 29 to Aug. 24, and progressed until round three.

Schitco was the first UTD student in history to make it this far in the FIDE World Cup. The FIDE World Cup takes place every two years and serves as the platform to crown the FIDE Champion. FIDE, recognized as the International Chess Federation, stands as one of the prominent governing bodies in chess, setting the regulations for both competitive and casual play. In this specific event, the ultimate distinction at stake is that of the FIDE World Champion for the year 2023, where Schitco participated and surpassed the first two rounds of the tournament.

There are several ways to be qualified to play in the FIDE tournament, but only 206 strong players were allowed in this tournament as the requirements were quite competitive. Schitco was one of those players, and he got in thanks to the Chess Olympiad he played in 2022. He represented the first board in Moldova's team in the Chess Olympiad.

"Moldova performed really well and we got 6th place out of 200 countries ... and got one spot to nominate for this World Cup, and considering that I was the captain for the Olympic team ... they decided to nominate me," Schitco said.

Schitco prepared for the matches through consistent training. Julio Sadorra, the coach of the UTD Chess team, claimed that Schitco put all his effort into training with his former coach in Moldova, and was fully supporting his triumph in the World Cup.

"I was checking on him, making sure he was training," Julio said. "I was cheering him on [and] making sure he got someone with him."

Schitco claimed that he wasn't nervous when starting off in the tournament because he had played in the Chess Olympiad and other serious tournaments before. As a result, this helped him relax in the tournament and keep a cool spirit.

"In the first round, I had a very comfortable match. I drew with

black and won with white," Schitco said. "There weren't long games, I managed to win before the tiebreak which is a special decider match played ... on the third day... [I] basically got a rest day."

Despite falling short of advancing to round four, Schitco's promising performance shines through. In fact, he managed to defeat Grandmaster Sam Shankland, who was 200 points higher in rating. This accomplishment shows that he has the potential to play in more rounds and eventually win the World Cup Title.

"We were playing in time trouble, so we had very little time left until the end of the game, and he made one very rushed decision which ended up in his king running into a checkmate," Schitco said.

Julio claimed that this was a very good win by Schitco. Moreover, Schitco played very solid in the game as he was very focused, and found a huge blunder created by the former US Champion Sam Shankland. As a result, Schitco won the game which shocked many in the chess community, but Julio saw coming.

"Other people I hear say lucky, it's a gift and all that," Julio said. "But to me, I always thought of it as teamwork. It takes two to tango in a chess game. Someone has to make a mistake for someone to win. And Sam, his role was to create an opportunity for someone [Schitco]." Julio is truly proud of the remarkable result in the FIDE World Cup, and is sure that Schitco is fit as a good leader for the UTD Chess team thanks to his huge wins.

"Man, [referring to Schitco] you're inspiring your teammates," Julio said. "No matter who we are playing in the Pan Ams, let's say, or other collegiate team events even if they have super gems. This is going to serve as a beacon of inspiration ... and Ivan did it."

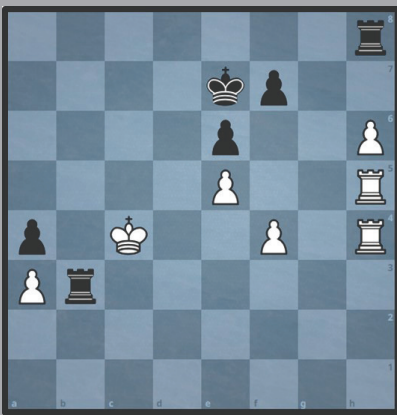
Schitco has learned a lot about the importance of psychology within chess by figuring out what type of mindset you should be in when playing chess whether you are winning or losing. As a result, it helped him advance so far in this knockout system of the World Cup.

"No matter if you win, if you lose," Schitco said. "It's an experience which changes you and it changes you not only chess wise but



FIDE | COURTESY

Only 206 players qualified for the FIDE tournament, with Schitco being one of them. Previously representing Moldova in the past Chess Olympiad, Schitco's skill and hard work brought him to progress until round three in the difficult tournament.



Previous move by White: Kxc4. Black to move. How can Black win?

White (Shackland) blundered by taking the pawn on c4, so Black (Ivan) found a mate in three moves by first checking the King with the rook at the back rank, and then align the Rook on the B file with the Rook on the C file. At this point, there is no way for White to save the game as checkmate is the next move for Black.

also gives you confidence going into the next tournaments, because you don't play them very often like players of such caliber."



FIDE | COURTESY

Cheer and power dancers nab summer awards

ANDRÉ AVERION
Mercury Staff

The UTD Cheer Team and Power Dancers brought home two DIII team awards, four individual awards and paid bid invitations on July 24 after attending the National Cheer Association and National Dance Association, or NCA/NDA, collegiate summer camp at the Southern Methodist University.

The NCA/NDA collegiate summer camp took place from July 21–23, marking a time for competitive teams across the nation to acquire new skills and earn bids towards the national competition that will take place in spring 2024. The Power Dancers earned a silver bid, and the Cheer Team earned a bronze bid at the end of the camp. Bids act as tiered paid invitations with bronze, silver and gold signifying how much hosts may pay for their invitation based on their camp performances. Spirit Program director Miguel Hernandez said it was an exciting start to the season.

"It was great! It's almost like a mini summer competition, but both [teams]

bids to go to nationals for that next April and we both got a bid to go," Hernandez said. "Mascots will submit a video later on throughout the year to get their bid to go to nationals, but summer's been good."

The UTD Spirit Program won first place in both Team Dance DIII and Game Day DIII before following up in 3rd place for the Rally Routine Small Intermediate CoEd Opening. Three power dancers won individual awards. Ruby Perry, power dance captain and psychology senior, not only placed as an All American, which is a high honor given by NDA Staff to perform across the world for special events, but also placed as the Top Gun for leaps for the second

time in a row, a prestigious recognition of a dancer's skill.

Perry wasn't alone in being invited to the All American honors. Both Leila Akhavan, power dance captain and neuroscience junior, and psychology junior Riley Glowacki made the All American invite.

This could be the last season the UTD Spirit Program is in the DIII NCA/NDA. Following the athletics department, Hernandez claims they will be admitted into DII as well, but according to the athletics director Angela Marin, the Spirit Program will not be eligible for the same scholarships that the NCAA is known for since they are separate organizations.

"Totally separate, yes. Just because they don't fall under the NCAA um-

SEE **CHEER**, PAGE 11

ANDRÉ AVERION |
MERCURY STAFF



UTD researchers uncover novel kidney cell renewal



YINGYU HUANG | COURTESY

The discovery, which was made through studying nanoparticles, reveals a previously unknown method by which kidney cells can self-renew.

VAISHNAVI JOSYULA
Mercury Staff

UTD biomedical researchers have discovered a new way that kidney cells can self-renew, opening doors to potential early detection of kidney disease.

The team — led by biochemistry professor Jie Zheng, research associate professor Mengxiao Yu and research scientist Yingyu Huang — was inspired by their colleague's research in 2017 and began researching the relationship between the size of nanoparticles in kidneys and renal clearance, or the rate at which kidneys remove substances from blood plasma and excrete them through urine.

"Kidney cells are not actively dividing like liver cells ... they cannot regenerate themselves so easily," Zheng said. "But what we found out [was] that kidney cells use nanoparticles as probes. We found [that] a kidney cell can self-renew its intracellular contents, so they use this intrinsic mechanism to push the old organelle out and then regenerate new or-

ganelles. That explains why our kidney can last so long even if it [a kidney cell] is not actually dividing. It's the new mechanism that helps us understand how the kidney cells keep themselves healthy."

Funded by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, or NIDDK, and internal UTD funds, the team was able to observe gold nanoparticles through the university's electron microscope and discover a previously unknown mechanism by which kidney cells remove intracellular nanoparticles and organelles, ultimately maintaining the health status of kidney cells.

"Before our discovery, people often thought kidney cells removed the nanoparticles through exocytosis," Yu said. "Exocytosis is to form some vesicles inside of the cells and the vesicles contain the nanoparticles and the vesicles move towards the membrane of the cells... to

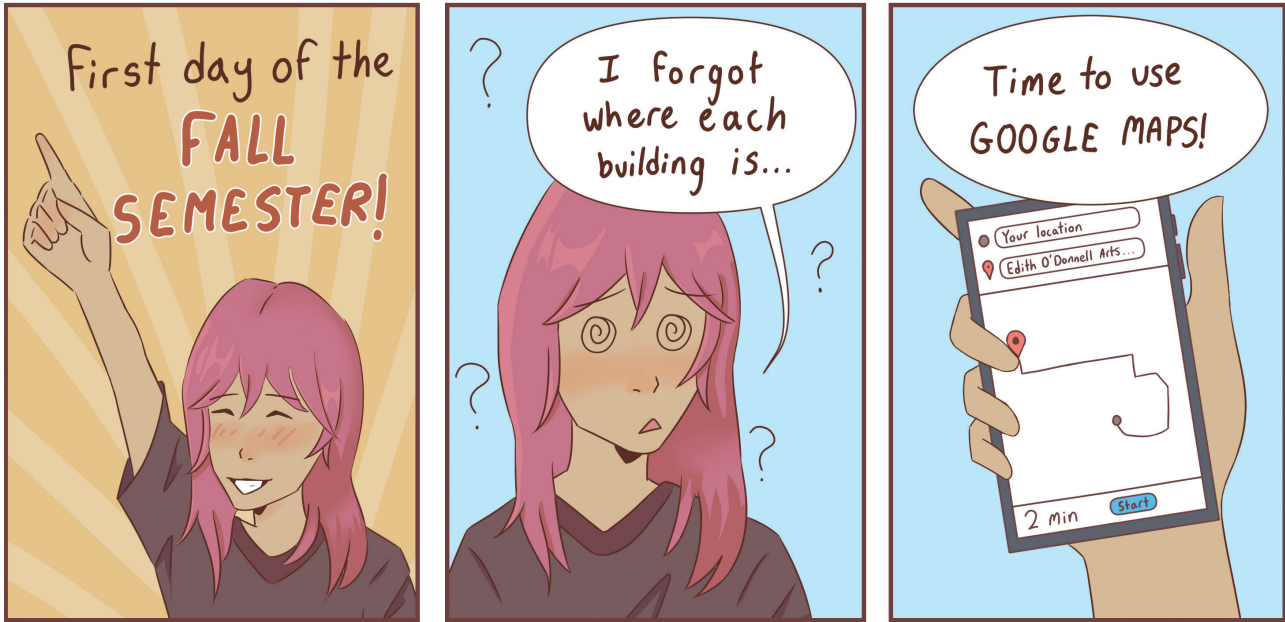
SEE **KIDNEY**, PAGE 12

BAG-GUY AND LIYA



ANDREW PETERS | MERCURY STAFF

WHERE IS EVERYTHING?



RACHEL WOON | MERCURY STAFF

8.21 Sudoku

		2						5
	6	7				4		1
	8	5	6					
			5	6	9	3		
		8						
	4					7		
					2		3	
3			9					2
	2				4	1		

7.24 Sudoku key Under the sea key

3	5	9	1	4	2	6	8	7
7	1	6	8	9	5	4	2	3
4	8	2	6	7	3	5	1	9
8	4	1	5	3	6	7	9	2
9	3	7	4	2	8	1	5	6
6	2	5	7	1	9	3	4	8
2	7	3	9	5	4	8	6	1
1	6	4	2	8	7	9	3	5
5	9	8	3	6	1	2	7	4

P	I	N	G	B	A	G	S	A	L	T	E	R
A	M	O	R	A	L	O	E	T	O	O	T	H
S	E	E	A	N	O	R	A	L	A	N	C	E
S	A	N	D	P	A	P	E	R	A	N	G	S
E	N	D	S	O	N	S	A	S	S			
A	C	O	R	N	O	T	R	O	T	H	A	N
N	A	N	O	B	R	A	I	N	R	A	T	E
T	R	A	Y	A	N	T	S	A	K	R	O	N
E	S	T	A	T	E	S	E	E	S			
S	A	L	S	A	C	R	A	B	A	P	P	L
P	L	I	E	S	A	E	R	O	A	R	I	A
A	I	M	A	T	L	A	M	S	S	E	N	T
R	E	E	L	S	E	D	Y	S	M	E	A	S

Which of these UTD official or unofficial mascots are you?

- Which of these activities are you most excited about this school year?
- A. Going to sports events
 - B. Discovering dining spots on and off campus
 - C. Exploring campus hidden-gem locations

- Which of these campus dining vendors most interests you?
- A. Dining Hall West and The Market
 - B. Chain restaurants like Taco Bell, Chick-fil-a, Halal Shack, etc.
 - C. Food trucks

- Which of these beverages would you pick?
- A. Energy drink
 - B. Coffee/tea
 - C. Smoothie

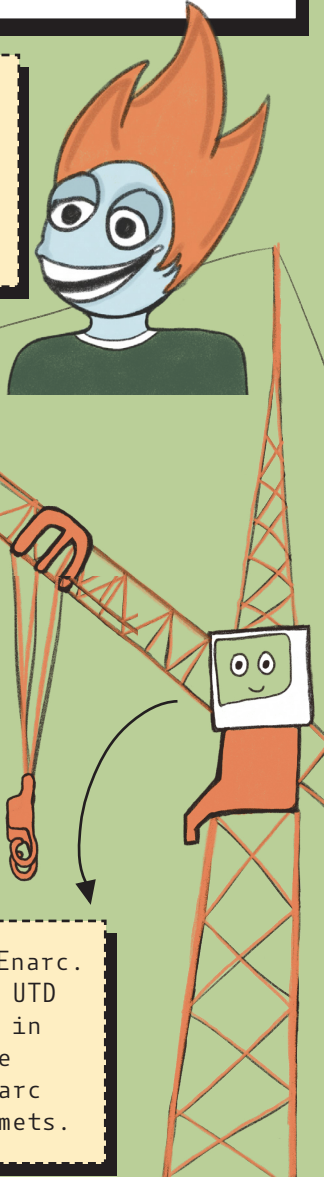
- Which of these courses would you pick for a free elective?
- A. Entrepreneurship
 - B. Reading Media Critically
 - C. Physical Geology

- Which of these is the least annoying to you?
- A. Overly school-spirited students
 - B. Malfunctioning technology
 - C. Construction noises at five in the morning

If you get mostly A's, you are Temoc. Temoc is "Comet" backward. You're the official UTD mascot that has been representing Comets since 1998. You are THE spirit of UTD.

If you get mostly B's, you are Tobor. Tobor is "Robot" backward. You are the dedicated tiny robots that deliver food around campus. As UTD's intergral creatures, Comets made Tobor one of UTD's unofficial mascots.

If you get mostly C's, you are Enarc. Enarc is "Crane" backward. When UTD started its rapid campus growth in the mid-2010s, Comets called the construction cranes "Enarc." Enarc quickly became beloved among Comets.



Give Me Some Space!

ACROSS

- 1 Pro __
- 5 Thailand, once
- 9 Esoteric
- 15 Possessive of Chinese food?
- 16 Space scrap?
- 17 Sheep in French
- 18 *Popular Post Malone song featured in Spiderman: Into the Spiderverse
- 20 Like houseplants
- 21 "The Jungle Book" python
- 22 Some prosecutors, for short
- 24 Elite Navy group
- 25 Shocking buildup?
- 28 "To Kill a Mockingbird" author
- 30 151, in old Rome
- 31 Consume
- 32 *A nickname given to a court known for its quick resolution of cases
- 37 Seat in Parliament?
- 39 "Don't reckon so"
- 40 Suffix with proto-
- 41 "Super cool!"... or a hint to the answers of the starred clues
- 47 Day before Fri.
- 48 Swim-bike-run race for short
- 49 Labor
- 51 *Arachnid know for causing humans to develop allergies to red meat
- 57 Silent assent
- 58 "I'll take that as _"
- 59 Historical period
- 60 Ones who might want to talk to your manager
- 62 Prefix with frost
- 65 "¿Cómo ___usted?"
- 68 Prof's helpers
- 69 Regain consciousness
- 71 *A vacation taken by a newly married couple
- 75 Not digital
- 76 And others: Abbr.
- 77 Jane Austen novel character who likes to matchmake between people who are entirely unsuited
- 78 They've got balls
- 79 Songs for one
- 80 Rookie, slangily

DOWN

- 1 Shares again, on Twitter (X)
- 2 Tempe sch.
- 3 Pork topping for 61
- 4 Similarly
- 5 ___ cone
- 6 Corn Belt state
- 7 Matured
- 8 Team esteem

- 9 UTD satire and opinion magazine
- 10 Aussie hoppers
- 11 Adorable
- 12 "Sic 'em"
- 13 Woman's name that sounds festive
- 14 Says, "We're through!"
- 19 Hideout
- 23 "Ready, __, go!"
- 25 Swell place?
- 26 Tropical tuber
- 27 Prove to be incorrect
- 29 "Legends of the Fall" director, informally
- 33 Purr-fect pet?
- 34 Elec. Bill unit
- 35 "Gone on vacay" in automated emails
- 36 Online shopping icon
- 38 Suffix with smurf or chip
- 42 Cries of surprise
- 43 "The Addams Family" cousin
- 44 __Lanka
- 45 Missing people?
- 46 Singer Celine
- 50 Mormons, initially
- 51 Pet that needs a sitter?
- 52 Common soccer score
- 53 Peggy Lee and Marilyn Monroe, at birth
- 54 "___ we there yet?"
- 55 Cases for dermatologists
- 56 Perry of pop
- 61 Common college student meal
- 63 Unfreeze
- 64 Dip __ in: test the water
- 66 Dorothy's dog
- 67 Uptight, informally
- 70 Ones with a classic style, on the streets
- 72 "Heading there now," in texts
- 74 Apprehend

ALANA PLATT | MERCURY STAFF



UTD MEDIA RELATIONS | COURTESY

New \$120 million UTD-UTSW medical facility opens

ANDRE AVERION
Mercury Staff

The Texas Instruments Biomedical Engineering and Science Building constructed by UTD and UT Southwestern opened in late July, with plans to move in researchers coming this September.

Coming off the heels of a \$15 million donation from Texas Instruments, UTD and UT Southwestern broke ground in November 2021 with the goal to advance related biomedical engineering fields such as molecular imaging, robotic and genetic engineering, semiconductors and artificial intelligence.

The five-story building will be 150,000 square feet, located on the

East Campus of UT Southwestern Medical Center. Despite being officially open, construction is ongoing and will not have research teams from UTD moved in until September according to Stephen Spiro, vice provost for faculty affairs.

“The goal and the philosophy is partly to simulate collaborative research between UT Dallas and UT Southwestern facially,” Spiro said. “[It is] to give our faculty who have health-relevant research the opportunity to access patient samples and collaborative interactions with clinicians.”

The Mercury will continue to follow this story as UTD research teams are decided upon in September.

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7th Day Coffee  20% off 12 min from UTD	Dimassi's Mediterranean Buffet  10% off 6 min from UTD	Bawarchi's Biryani  15% off 8 min from UTD	Palio's Pizza Cafe  15% off 4 min from UTD	Sonny Bryan's Smokehouse  20% off 3 min from UTD
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TEJAL DHAN | MERCURY STAFF

ITS major changes name starting Fall '23

Now called Computer Information Systems and Technology (CITS), courses and requirements stay the same for ITS students

VAISHNAVI JOSYULA
Mercury Staff

Beginning fall 2023, the Information Technology and Systems program, or ITS, will be renamed to Computer Information Systems and Technology, or CIS Tech.

CIS Tech program director Timothy Stephens said that the name change process, which began in spring 2023 and has been in the works for years now, aims to reflect the degree's intersection of business and computer science. While CIS Tech will remain a Bachelor of Science degree in JSOM, the name change — which does not change program staff, faculty, and class requirements — emphasizes the technical aspect of the program and makes it more marketable.

“Having a degree that shows both the business and the technical side will certainly build strength in the resume and LinkedIn profiles because, quite frankly, a lot of our careers are built around business and system analysts and those kinds of things,” Stephens said.

According to CIS Tech program manager Andrea Croasdale Woudwyk, incoming students will be automatically enrolled in the fall 2023

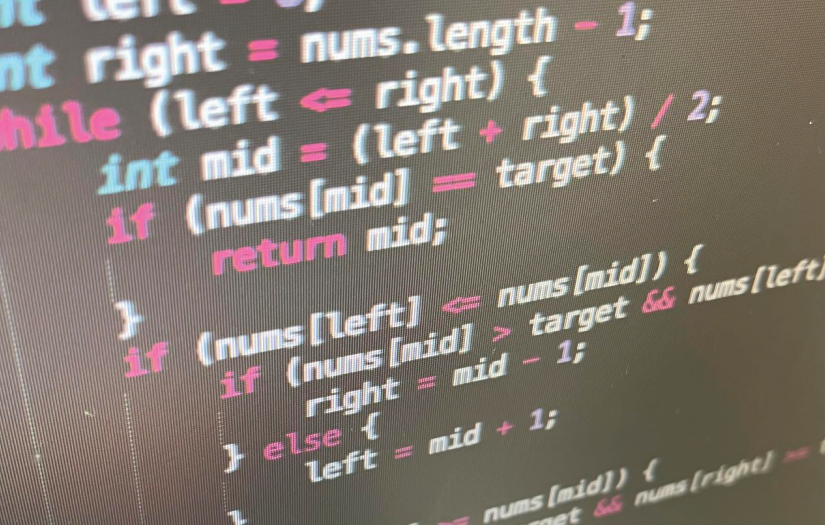
CIS Tech course catalog. Existing students can apply for a Change of Major request in Orion if they want their diploma to reflect the name change by enrolling in the fall 2023 CIS Tech course catalog. Once a student submits the request, JSOM advising will send an updated degree plan and the student may stop the process at any time if they decide not to make the change.

“Between the last year's ITS 2022 catalog and the new CIS Tech 23 catalog, there's very little change [but] in 2021 and previous years, if they had an internship that met the three credit hour requirement, they were able to use that as a guided elective,” Woudwyk said. “Additionally, JSOM has a community engagement requirement. One of the ways to satisfy that is with the three credit hour course. Again, those earlier catalogs were able to use the three credit hour courses to satisfy guided elective requirements. Those were not allowed after 2022 ... so this is where students tend to see where they might see a difference between the degree plans. That is, if they are coming from an older catalog that made different allowances than the new catalog does.”

For students with any questions, Woudwyk said that both the ITS (bsits@utdallas.edu) and CIS Tech (bscist@utdallas.edu) emails will continue to be active. In addition, ITS merchandise can still be purchased while supplies last and the CIS Tech website is currently being updated to reflect the name change. She emphasized that the program staff, faculty, and classes remain the same, with the only difference being the name change.

“Students technically have until the summer of 2027 to complete an ITS degree plan so it's going to be here for a while, but we'll take the next semester, if not year, to kind of ease people into that,” she said. “What I'm putting in emails, I generally say CIS Tech/ITS. We'll probably continue that method for at least the fall semester, if not the spring as well. However, we are going to start transitioning more fully to just CIS Tech. However, we're still going to have references to ITS. It's going to exist because the program still exists. There will still be students graduating with ITS on their diploma.”

Continuing the name change, the CIS Tech program is undergo-



VEDANT SAPRA | PHOTO EDITOR

Though under the School of Management, ITS, now called CITS, involves programming mixed with a business viewpoint. Despite not being primarily business focused, the major has the largest enrollment percentage in JSOM. The recent name change aims to make students stand out during their job search.

ing several changes, including a new program director, a new student engagement program, and a professional program in IT. Woudwyk said that students can stay up to date on these changes by checking emails from her, Stephens, or the program's inbox.

“Over one fourth of the total [JSOM] undergraduate enrollment is this program, so ... that means that there's lots of opportunities

with that and those opportunities will continue to grow as our environment changes in those kinds of things as well,” Stephens said. “We continue to evolve as our employers' needs evolve and our student population evolves. I think that's one of the key messages: ‘Why did you change the name?’ It's just part and parcel of what we are, [what] we do, and how we do it.”

UT DALLAS 2023 SPORTS SCHEDULE

 MENS SOCCER 9/1 AT WHEATON, 5 P.M. 9/3 AT BABSON, 4 P.M. 9/10 AT SOUTH WESTERN, 2:30 P.M. 9/15 AT TX LUTHERAN, 8:00 P.M. 9/17 VS TX COLORADO COLLEGE, 1:00 P.M.	 WOMENS SOCCER 9/1 AT UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS- 5PM 9/3 AT SCHREINER-12PM 9/8 AT CENTENARY- 6PM 9/10 AT AUSTIN COLLEGE- 6PM 9/15 VS HENDRIX-6PM	 VOLLEYBALL 9/1 VS UW-OSHKOSH, 10 A.M. 9/2 VS WHITWORTH, 7 P.M. 9/2 AT TRINITY, 2:30 P.M. 9/5 VS ST. THOMAS, 6:00 P.M. 9/12 VS EAST TEXAS BAPTIST, 6:00 P.M.
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ADITI MUNGALE | MERCURY STAFF

Minutes count: students learn to save lives



ALL PHOTOS BY RUBEN RODRIGUEZ | MERCURY STAFF

Students acquire hands-on training in medical crises, ranging from appendicitis to heart attacks and pediatrics to geriatrics. Two students practice CPR procedures on a dummy as part of the EMT course. One student provides the dummy with oxygen with a bag valve mask, or BVM, while the other administers chest compressions. An electrode on the dummy's chest connects to the EKG to record heartbeats.

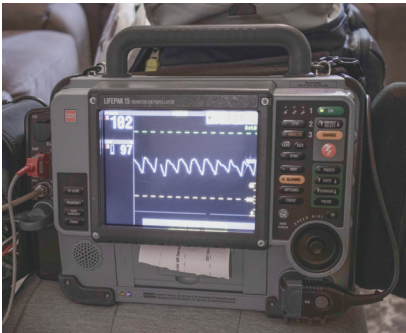
About UEMR

UEMR was founded in 2016 by two alumni who intended to provide emergency medical services (EMS) at campus events.

UEMR students helped provide COVID-19 tests and vaccines during the pandemic.

So far, the EMT program has had around 750 students, with 190 students taking the class in summer 2023.

UEMR currently has 80 providers.



An electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG), a monitor that checks for heart conditions, is a part of the medical kit.



The organization uses non-transporting EMS vehicles to respond to medical emergencies and provide services.



Students celebrate their graduation from the summer EMT course with a CareFlite helicopter landing in August.

UEMR introduces new paramedic course

VAISHNAVI JOSYULA
Mercury Staff

The University Emergency Medical Response, or UEMR, program is launching a new paramedic course in fall 2023, three years after the creation of the Emergency Response Team course.

According to Emergency Medical Services Director Sheila Elliott, the student-run program — one of three programs in Texas and the only one in the UT system — provides first-response calls on campus 24/7 throughout the year. Students who pass the EMT and paramedic course are eligible to test for the National Registry of EMTs certification.

“In this [EMT] course, we learn patient assessment. They [students] get experience in the field by going to the emergency room and riding on the ambulance and practicing their skills on real people,” Elliott said. “On an ambulance, normally you have an EMT and a paramedic except most of our cities will have two paramedics. This [the paramedics course] is where we learn how to start IVs and do EKGs and it’s a lot more advanced. It’s the highest certification that an EMS person would have on an ambulance.”

While the EMT course does not have a prerequisite, the paramedic course requires students to complete the EMT course. Both courses are open to students, staff, and the public although the EMT class is offered in fall, spring, and summer for one month or four months while the paramedic course is a nine month program that starts in fall.

“Starting the paramedic program was definitely a lot of gray hairs, so that took 18 months of work,” Elliott said. “And we had been in Founders North, which was a lot smaller. Over January to May, we were able to renovate this building

What's in a medic bag?

Oral airway adjuncts to keep a patient's airway open

Medications

Nasal airway adjunct to keep a patient's airway open

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Non-rebreather to deliver oxygen

I-gel, an airway device

Gauze

Tourniquets to stop blood flow to a profusely bleeding limb

SAM splints to stabilize broken bones

[S&G]. And so we were able to really customize how we could make this space the most useful. We just purchased an Anatomage table and it’s [a] super cool way to learn how the body functions because you can see different layers of it and you can see how it moves and all the joints and ligaments. This will be a great learning resource, not just for us, but for the university because we’re sharing it with them as well.”

Although most students who take the EMT and paramedic courses go into the medical field, they all have different rea-

sonings for doing so. Elliott became a paramedic because of her son who had five open-heart surgeries, while biology senior and UEMR administrative officer Shreya Billa joined the program to get exposure to clinical practice.

“I think that’s the reason why a lot of members joined UEMR — they get exposure to a lot of clinical practice during the EMT class and during our normal shifts during the school year, and it’s on campus,” Billa said. “Along with the normal medical skills... I think I’ve gained a bit more confidence, especially

in my leadership roles. I’m not generally an outgoing person or a talkative person, but over time being in different positions required me to talk to new people [and] to be more confident in my abilities and my understanding of what I know and what I don’t know.”

Along with teaching students the necessary skills to become an EMT, the program also fosters a sense of community and belonging. According to Mark Salazar, a neuroscience senior and UEMR training lieutenant, being a part of UEMR helped him grow throughout college as he was able to learn from his seniors in addition to attending the FEMA HAZMAT program in Alabama in August.

“We were there for five days and out of all the classes they had in the summer, I chose [to take] the hazardous materials operations [course] because I think it’ll be cool for us to understand our campus,” Salazar said. “Our campus has a lot of laboratories and these laboratories have chemicals, and if something happens like a spill, we need to make sure that we know how to respond to that sort of thing. Then I got to see the HAZMAT team pull up and they got to wear the spacesuits. It wasn’t until this training that I kind of understood how it worked.”

Elliott said that she hopes to provide additional course offerings, including different dates and times for the EMT course and a two-year UEMR program at a slower pace for seniors taking a gap year.

“We also hope to increase the number of EMS providers within UEMR so we can staff crews at multiple locations on campus during peak times,” Elliott said. “We hope to have our students become the best paramedics in Texas.”

EMS

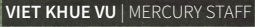
EMS, or emergency medical services, is a first responder system that answers emergency calls, assesses medical situations, and determines the appropriate level of care, including dispatching an ambulance if necessary.

EMT

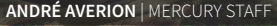
An EMT, or emergency medical technician, is an entry-level EMS provider who is trained to administer CPR, treat bandage wounds, take vital signs, and offer fundamental care for patients. A student needs about 200 hours to become an EMT.

Paramedics

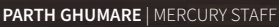
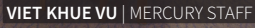
A paramedic is a higher-level EMS professional with advanced training who is able to insert IV lines, interpret EKGs, administer medication, and offer a broader range of support for patients. A student needs more than 1000 hours to become a paramedic.



they're a perfect place for your lunch break. McDermott Library offers several floors of study areas whose noise levels decrease with each floor you ascend. Of course, for some people, socializing is a form of relaxation. If you want to be surrounded by chatter and coffee, the steps in front of the Plinth are a great spot to hang out with friends.



Near parking lots C and D, you can find hammocks to lay back and take a quick nap before your



SEE-SAW FILMS | COURTESY

Mercury Staff

Adapted from Alice Oseman's series of graphic novels with the same title, "Heartstopper" follows Nick (Kit Connor) and Charlie (Joe Locke) as they navigate their feelings and relationship as it evolves. The first season saw Nick and Charlie discover themselves. Accompanied by their group of endearing and supportive friends, the teens stumble through life, overcoming the challenges of young adulthood. However, the second season takes a refreshing twist as the entire group leaves the UK and heads to Paris, France for a school trip. The series allows the audience to immerse themselves in the quirky friend group and have a more intimate look into their blooming relationships.

One of my favorite parts of last season was the friend group that Charlie introduces Nick to. From the original trio of Tao, Elle and Isaac to the new additions of Tara and Darcy, the close bonds are reminiscent of the authentic friendships that arise throughout adolescence. The new episodes are built upon these established

relationships and give the secondary characters more time to develop, while keeping the spotlight on Nick and Charlie's love story. By discussing the family dynamics and personal lives of the supporting cast, the show made me feel like I was a part of their group — as if I was there going to school dances and exploring the streets of France. It is not often that you see such strong and wholesome friendships depicted in mainstream media, let alone such friendships between boys. Often, high school friendships are depicted as drama-filled and toxic. Heartstopper does a fantastic job of pushing the plot through drama while maintaining the innocent nature of young friendships.

Following the plot of the graphic novels, the students all fly off to France to get up to their usual antics, but with a Parisian twist. Though Paris is not a rare backdrop in media for European adventures, seeing it through the pastel-colored lens of the Heartstopper cast was practically perfect. The lighting and color design in the show stands out because of its distinct, colorful aesthetic that goes along with the original illustrations. To match whatever significant plot moments happen, tiny cartoon doodles appear around the characters involved. It is a wonderful storytelling technique that relates the show back to its graphic novel roots, and an adorable framing device that helps the audience

SEE **HEARTSTOPPER**, PAGE 12

Vending Machine Legend:

- Number of working VM
- Number of non-working VM
- Number of VM that may work (they may have network errors)

Note: The vending machines listed on the UTD Auxiliary website and the interactive map are not current. Mercury staff tested vending machines by seeing if they authorize the card payment or not, including debit/credit cards and Comet cards at applicable machines. We did not test vending machines in residence halls, University Village clubhouses, and Canyon Creek.

KATHERYN HO | MERCURY STAFF

Decorated head coach retires after 23 years

Terry Butterfield retired as the longest standing coach in UTD Athletic history. He's known for his fiery demeanor and tough-love coaching style which made him famous amongst Divison II coaches.



UTD ATHLETICS | COURTESY

" I came to UTDallas believing that I would be here for a few years, get my feet wet with some coaching experience, then return to the North East where I came from - maybe coach Division I sports. That never happened... The types of characters we get at UTD kept me here. These kids are smart, disclipined, passionate - they're playing for the love it. They're inspiring.

" —Butterfield
Former MMB coach

" A lot of what he taught us wasn't necessarily to win games. He was teaching us things to be better husbands, better fathers, better in business... His diligence, his work ethic, his ability to show up no matter what's going on - it's something I'm envious of.

" —Brandon Greene
Former MMB player, current high school MMB coach on Butterfield

A feature on Terry Butterfield, his career, and the impact he's left on the men's basketball program and its' players is in the works and will be available for viewing at utdmercury.com later this month.



UTD'S COME KNOCK

Jared Fleming chose UTD three times - once as an undergraduate basketball player, then as a coach, and now as a head coach.



UTD ATHLETICS | COURTESY

Butterfield and Fleming seated next to each other watching plays intently. Fleming played himself on that same court from 2006 to 2010 under Butterfield, before returning as assitant coach in 2015.

BUTTERFIELD AND FLEMING CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2000

Terry Butterfield is hired as the head coach of men's basketball.



2004

Butterfield wins first ASC championship and first ASC coach of the year title.



2006

Fleming joins the team.

2009

The Comet squad makes it to the "Elite 8" - the furthest they've ever progressed in the NCAA.



2010

As a senior, Fleming leads "Sweet 16" trip.

2014

The squad that made the Elite 8 trip in 2009 are inducted into the Hall of Honors, including Fleming.

2015

Fleming accepts the offer for assistant coach of the MMB team.



WOMEN'S SOCCER



BELLA GRANADA
3LV Position
Child Learning & Development Sr.

How do you feel about the upcoming fall 2023 season?

This upcoming season is very exciting because of how special it is. It will be our first season with a completely new coaching staff which will speak volumes on our program and our adaptability to new coaching styles and the expectations that come with it. Personally, I believe this team will deliver. I've seen a lot of growth from players and the younger talent is eager to succeed. Overall, to say I'm excited for this season is an understatement. We have a lot to prove this season, but the team has responded well to the pressure and will perform.

What do you think made you successful last season, and how do you think that'll transition into the new season?

My success last season came from my teammates. I am determined to not let anyone down and that has not changed. However, this season has an added element of pressure as it will be my last season. Selfishly because of that I want to win more than ever. This year my focus is finishing my career on a high note for both my teammates and me.



STUDENT ATHL

How do you feel about UTD possibly being moved into the NCAA DII as early as Fall 2024?

Personally, I believe it is well deserved. It's a change that the team has been working towards alongside with all the other athletic teams, coaches, and administration in UTD athletics. It's an exciting move for everyone and I can't wait to see it in action.

What makes your team stand out from the competition in your opinion?

The UTD Women's Soccer team withstands adversity on every front. All our players have their own story. On top of that our program lost an entire coaching staff in a season. This did not break us. Instead, the team became more competitive and continues to rise to every challenge placed in front of us. We adapt well. We encourage change. We look forward. This team is special. Speaking on talent within a team can lay out a pretty picture, but speaking on a team's spirit, morale, and culture changes the game. It will take a lot to beat us because we will never beat ourselves.



NAHUM PILLI | MERCURY STAFF

KING THREE TIMES

ball player, another time as assistant coach, and a final time as head coach

Director of Athletics Angela Marin said Fleming beat out hundreds of applicants in a national search for head coach. "Ultimately I chose Jared for many reasons," Marin said. "One, he's a former student athlete, and he's chosen Dallas multiple times throughout his life... but two, it takes a very specific student athlete to be successful here. Jared has had so much experience, not only as a student athlete himself, but recruiting and he understands who needs to be recruited here especially through the [D-II] transition. He has that knowledge that nobody else had. And Jared is an outstanding human being and fits within our coaches perfectly. Jared is a perfect fit. So I was honored to be able to promote him."



Pictured to the left, Terry Butterfield and Jared Fleming shake hands. Butterfield passed the proverbial baton onto Fleming this summer after announcing his retirement from head coach of the men's basketball team. Fleming, who worked as assistant headcoach of the men's basketball team for eight years, credits Butterfield as a mentor and formidable figure - someone who "helped ignite fire in him."



UTD ATHLETICS | COURTESY

Fleming, pictured above with Butterfield and Greene, was a junior when the Comets made the Elite 8 run in 2009. As a senior he helped lead the team to another NCAA appearance, this time in the Sweet Sixteen. Butterfield attributes Fleming's raw work ethic as a reason for his successes, both on and off the court.

“

My first job graduating from UTD was with a minor league baseball team in Shreveport Louisiana with ticket operations ... I realized quickly that I missed the competitiveness, and I wanted to care about winning. When the former assistant left, Butterfield called me back and said it was time to come to come home.

“

The older guys call him by his first name - not out of lack of respect but because of the relationship you build with him ... In terms of gameplay, we're going to have a lot more freedom on the offensive ends to play how we plan... it's something we're all excited about.

”

—Fleming
MMB coach

—Luke Kiser
MMB captain
on Fleming

A feature on Jared Fleming, his career as assistant headcoach, and his plans to build on Butterfield's success and lead the men's basketball program through the NCAA D-II league is in the works and will be available for viewing at utdmercury.com later this month.



UTD ATHLETICS | COURTESY

2018

The Comets play first international games in Italy. They win; they're "undefeated on foreign soil."

2019

Fleming helps lead the team to win the ASC conference championship - his first as assistant coach.



2023

Butterfield claims his ninth and final ASC coach of the year title in Spring.



July

Butterfield announces his retirement.

August

Out of a pool of hundreds of applicants, Fleming is named the third head coach of the men's basketball team.



ETE LEADER SPOTLIGHT

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL



IZZY SUNDQUIST
Setter Position
Neuroscience Sr.

How do you feel about the upcoming fall 2023 season?

I am super excited about this season, we are starting our preseason this week and it's been a blast! We have a pretty big freshman class and I'm looking forward to seeing what they can do. This season we are trying to achieve goals that this program has not reached yet, like competing for a national championship!

What do you think made you successful last season, and how do you think that'll transition into the new season?

I think what made us successful last season is our attention to detail and the "little things". Our team culture is built around everyone doing their part to a high standard on the court and in the classroom, which is what I believe made us prepared to handle big moments in the conference and regional matches. We have a good group of returning members that will play a key part in making sure the successful, competitive culture continues this season so we are ready to compete for more championships!

How do you feel about UTD possibly being moved into the NCAA DII as early as Fall 2024?

I think it's a great move for the school and athletics. UTD is such a strong academic school, and offering D2 athletics will help bring some big things to UTD. I'm really excited to see what our teams can do at the next level.

What makes your team stand out from the competition in your opinion?

We make sure to keep volleyball fun! During home games, the student section, spirit teams, and band really help keep the good energy going and we love it! Additionally, I think our culture sets us apart, hands down. We are very proud of the championship culture the previous members of the team have set into place over the years and being able to maintain it is no small feat.

*This is a recurring series. We will have more Student Athlete Leaders in the spotlight next issue. SHUBHAM Jha | MERCURY STAFF

Editorial

A win for sports, is a win for UTD

Faculty seem skeptical of UTD's growing sports identity. But there's no reason a strong sports and scholarly prescence can't coexist

FATIMAH AZEEM
Editor-in-Chief

Despite recent successes in academic fields, UTD faculty have expressed skepticism about our university's burgeoning sports identity. But why see it as a binary choice? Academic excellence and a robust sports identity aren't mutually exclusive; they complement each other.

In a video from the academic senate this summer, faculty voiced concerns and doubts about the expansion of sports on campus, namely that they might divert students' attention from classes. However, The Mercury encourages all of its readers to think about the big picture: UTD is in an unprecedented era of growth. This isn't just growth through new buildings like the revamped Student Union or new art hubs like the Athenaeum, but a seismic shift in where our university derives its identity on a national level. The recent transition to Division II sports paves the way for scholarships, enhanced sporting facilities and more competitive athletic programs. The new track and field complex — set to break ground next summer — will be open to all Comets, athlete or not. These upgrades to Athletics come alongside initiatives for semiconductor technology and a growing biomedical engineering research program with UT Southwestern. However, Athletics finally getting more recognition is not deterring academic or research pursuits — in fact,

the same athletes out on our basketball courts and soccer fields are in those very labs.

"I've taken so much with me from basketball," Kelden Pruitt, a doctorate student who played on UTD's men's basketball team as an undergraduate with two NCAA shows while working in bioimaging research and pursuing a biomedical engineering degree, said, "The biggest thing was the relationships you build. When you do something like practicing two to three hours a day, six days a week, and then you go on road trips and play games out of state, the bonding with the guys — the friendship — is indescribable. That's what kept me around."

Pruitt isn't alone. The Mercury interviewed over 30 current and former UTD athletes this past summer and spring for various stories, who all expressed positive attitudes towards their sport and the impact it had in their lives. Participating in sports in college forces students to develop better time management skills as well as fostering life-long relationships, both personal and professional. As President Benson said in the academic senate video, most student athletes "tend to have higher GPA than the average population. They are more disciplined. They're often times healthier."



OLUWASUN ADEYEMI | MERCURY STAFF

There's a misconception that pouring funds into athletics comes at a cost to academics. But it isn't a zero-sum game. Financial allocations towards sports come from unrestricted funds, a pool of money not designated towards any particular department.

This means the university is not pulling from academic funds to finance sports. The academic sector is healthily financed with over \$200 million and growing allocated to it this year, while for the same year, the Athletic department has a budget of less than \$3 million. Thus, it is imperative that Athletics receive extra funding in order to maintain their current facilities and grow to support more student athletes. Added funding will allow Athletics to hire dedicated staff and operate more autonomously; given the unique life balance student athletes must strike, this staff expansion is crucial. And when it comes to scholarship funding, it's important to remember that Division II athletes still have to meet the same academic standards for entry into the university as their peers before their sports scholarship can finance their education.

UTD's transition to Division II sports will cultivate a well-rounded campus experience and attract a diverse cohort of students interested in research, sports, arts and more. Consider great institutions like Duke or Ohio State University. Their reputations are not built solely on academics or their strong basketball programs, but a combination of both. Students at these school juggle the demands of

labs, lecture halls and sports arenas, embodying the multifaceted nature of a comprehensive educational experience. Likewise, UTD's identity is grounded in multiple areas of campus, and it aims to expand its accomplishments across these departments like any forward-thinking university.

If there's anything our campus could use more of, it's community spirit. UTD was ranked in the top 10 most unhappy campuses by the Princeton Review in 2018, which was attributed to excessive solitude. But it doesn't need to remain that way. Funding towards Student Affairs and a more vibrant sports culture fosters camaraderie, invigorates student life and offers a collective, shared experience; all opportunities for Comets to come together.

UTD's nerdy identity isn't going anywhere. So, to the skeptics: this September, take a Saturday off. Step out of the lab or away from the controller and immerse yourself in a basketball, soccer or volleyball game. Experience the thrill, the unity and the sheer joy of watching a live match, and you might come to appreciate what sports offer. Even the writers at The Mercury find themselves drawn to the games, where adrenaline and spirit are unparalleled.

It's not about choosing academics over athletics or vice versa. It's about embracing growth, celebrating diversity and realizing that UTD's strength lies in its multifaceted identity.

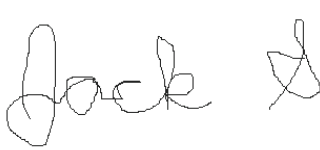
FATIMAH AZEEM
Editor-in-Chief



TEJAL DHAN
Managing Editor



JACK SIERPUTOWSKI
News Editor



MIA NGUYEN
Life and Arts Editor



Now is the time to get involved

EYOUEL MEKONNEN
Courtesy

Six years ago, I moved into my first residence hall; a small room with white cinder-block walls, fluorescent lights, floor tiles from the 1980s, twin beds, and a community bathroom. After unpacking the two suitcases I brought, I sat at my desk. Eager but terrified. Excited but overwhelmed.

My time as an undergraduate student in the past and my time working in higher education in the present has taught me that your college experience is incomplete until you get involved on campus. There is a lot more to college than lecture halls and exams. Ever since its birth amidst the sand-dune seas of Morocco, the university campus remains a hotbed for innovative ideas, scientific breakthroughs, and significant cultural movements. The college campus is not only a place to meet like-minded people. It is full of people with remarkably different experiences, stories, beliefs, convictions, and cultures. It is where academic rigor, youthful energy, and creativity collide. For four short years, the world comes together to live, learn, and grow. Whether you are a first-year student or a senior, this campus is the perfect place to examine your assumptions, wrestle with your worldview, and pursue your passions.

Involvement in campus activities leads to better academic performance. A research project at the University of Michigan shows that students with minimal involvement in "campus recreational programs completed significantly more credits per year and obtained a significantly higher grade point average." However, it is a common and tempting misconception to think employers are only interested in your academic performance.

Employers are looking for much more

SEE **ACTIVITES**, PAGE 12

SAG strikes could herald turning point for creatives and just compensation

UNAIZA KHAKOO
Editor-in-Chief

Long gone are the days of Blockbuster and in came the era of Netflix and Hulu. As these streaming giants quickly began dominating how we consume media, questions of how employees of these entertainment projects would be compensated arose. As a result, the Screen Actors Guild's American Federation of Television and Radio Artists division — better known as the SAG-AFTRA actors' union — has been on strike as executives renegotiate their contract with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which expired on June 30. For those in the industry or with hopes of joining the industry, this is monumental. Seeing the process happen in real time makes it glaringly obvious that major corpo-

rations don't see the value in the talent that brings them money and are consequently unwilling to compensate them properly.

In the previous model, where DVDs and downloads were prominent, actors and writers would receive payments in what were known as residuals. The numbers would be calculated depending on how much time the actor spent on set and how many downloads and DVDs were sold. Eventually, when networks began airing movies, a new layer was added to the formula. The problem arose when streaming services were thrown into the mix because they offered unlimited views of movies and shows on a subscription basis. The calculations became more complicated, essentially wiping out the residual checks.

For many in the entertainment industry, those checks were essential parts of their

livelihood that helped them meet their basic needs. Often, we imagine movie stars living in big houses and walking red carpets every other weekend. However, the reality is that those A-listers are the exception among many. Most actors and writers, especially those supporting the strike, are background extras or small roles. Consequently, the residual checks are what make them a living until they finally get their breakout role. Unfortunately, the way that streaming services have continued to pocket their profit while undermining the creatives involved has brought the starving artists trope a little too close to reality — being a small-time actor is no longer sustainable.

For avid film enthusiasts and industry professionals alike, the strike means that their passions are being temporarily shut down. It has been interesting to see press



RAINIER PEDERSON | MERCURY STAFF

tours such as those for "Barbie" and "Openheimer" end due to the strike. From the outside, it seems like the whole situation is just prolonging your anticipated releases, but when you dig deeper, it is easy to real-

SEE **SAG**, PAGE 12

Poor parking and transportation on campus isn't only UTD's doing

TEJAL DHAN
Managing Editor

For many students, commuting to school is a great option to save money, but in recent years, it's often felt like the savings aren't worth the trouble when realizing how inconvenient parking is at UTD.

By now, all of us know that UTD is a commuter school. 78% of students live off campus as of fall 2021 — an impressive number for a school with over 30,000 students — and yet parking is a hassle. To park in a comfortable area within a 5-minute walk from your classes, you'd have to purchase the orange student parking pass. Currently, that costs over \$400 a year, a weighty cost for students already paying for tuition. The next cheapest parking pass, gold parking, may seem more affordable until you remember that your parking spot isn't guaranteed and people with orange parking

passes can choose to park in gold if they can't find a spot close by campus. Given all these options, green parking permits are a popular choice. At \$169 per year, you have access to any green parking spot across campus, but they're unfortunately the furthest away from major buildings and won't be offered in parking structures anymore after Sept. 1.

Frankly, paying \$169 per year to walk half a mile to class in extreme Texas weather— both hot and cold — is a scam, and it's even more egregious when considering that green permits used to be less than \$150 until 2022.

I've noticed students immediately blaming UTD. "Parking sucks," "it's overpriced," "finding parking here is like hell"... we've heard it all. And while it's easy to blame our own university, which admittedly does play a part in the current parking dilemma, the issue is much more deep-rooted than we want to believe.

The issue with parking stems from the United States' horrendous, car-dependent society, which is magnified in the state of Texas. The Texas Department of Transportation, or TxDOT, proposes that 88% of its \$30 billion budget for 2024–25 will go to highway maintenance, project development and project delivery. All this

funding comes from the State Highway Fund, which is derived from citizen's vehicle and fuel-related taxes and fees. This means that residents of Texas are essentially funding the building and maintenance of highway systems across the state through taxes. That seems standard, until a closer look re-

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JASON SADHANANDH | MERCURY STAFF

NEWS

ATHENAEUM
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

project architect for the Perot Museum of Nature and Science in downtown Dallas — is accompanied by a 1,100-space parking lot and is currently undergoing construction.

“We have 10 foot by 30 foot precast concrete structures that are being hung on the steel armature that create the wall of the museums,” Hofland said. “Morphosis designed a tessellation pattern that’s based on an Asian design. When you look closely, you’ll see it in the sunlight, it will sparkle like a pearl on campus, which I’m very excited about.”

The museum will include a large event space under a canopy on the first floor and galleries on the second floor, a loan from the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth in the lobby, followed by a staircase leading to the Crow gallery on its left and Bar gallery on the right. The second floor will also house a seminar room for workshops along with the Richard Brettell reading room.

“[The Bar gallery is] the complementary section of the museum that will hold a partnership installation with the Dallas Museum of Art, so we’re bringing some of the treasures of our local city’s art museum,” Hofland said. “In an exhibition curated by Dr. Michael Thomas at the Edith O’Donnell Institute of Art History... it will celebrate the gifts of the Jonsson, Green, and McDermott families to the Dallas Museum of Art.”

The remaining space in the Bar gallery will be used for an incubator exhibition of Latin American art, which Hofland believes will be the second museum in the Athenaeum. The Crow gallery will showcase older art from religions still alive today, including Hinduism and Buddhism, infused with traditions of East, Southeast, and South Asian cultures. Hofland added that the museum will include a jade room — “a heartbeat of the collection” — which will comprise works

that incorporate jade, a gemstone and symbol of prosperity in Chinese culture. Additionally, there are plans in the future to add an exhibition showcasing Islamic art as well.

“Our former curator, Jacqueline Chao, has written a new handbook for all of the opportunities we see here at UT Dallas academically,” she said. “It will give a little bit of history and a lot of overview of how the collection spans time and geography and religious and cultural contexts. As a technology campus, it’s really important that we are on the daring edge of how technology enhances the visitor experience so we’re partnering with the Bass school to work with students ... where we’ll present digital works of art.”

Hofland said she and Natalia Di Pietrantonio, the Crow Museum’s new curator, are currently working on the visitor experience and tying it back to the museum’s theme of compassion and wonder. She also hopes that students, staff, and the public can hold and teach workshops, such as tai chi or ceramics, to destress from the busy world.

“We don’t have time or space to wonder much, especially as a busy student, so can this museum be your place for sort of taking a deep breath and really asking questions,” Hofland said. “We want our exhibitions to feel like you need to see them because what I want [is] the next time you visit to be a little bit different, and I think technology will help us create that kind of sense of urgency. I want this to be a portal to the world and so I believe these exhibitions will be so important for us to initiate dialogues.”

Hofland said that the museum will open doors to student employment including but not limited to a student advisory board, a student docent program, and student internship programs. She added that the museum will help students honor the intricacies of Asian art and culture regardless of their heritage. While

Phase I will continue to undergo construction throughout the year, Phase II of the Athenaeum — a 680-seat performance hall — will simultaneously undergo construction as well.

“We’re in the process now of designing this building [the performance hall] and adding it to the CIP, or capital improvement projects for the Board of Regents approval,” Jamison said. “The goal would be that this would be completed in the spring of ’26. The fact that there will be an arts district that’s anchored by a museum, a performance hall, and a plaza by which students, faculty and staff will have access is an extremely strong attraction for persons who are considering UTD as a STEAM university.”



UTD | COURTESY



Above are exterior and interior renderings of Phase I of the Edith and Peter O'Donnell Jr. Athenaeum which is projected to be finished in August of 2024. Phase I will feature art from the Crow Museum of Asian Art, which will be free for students to view.



UTD | COURTESY

NIKA
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

rules including complying with high-level electronic surveillance and a 6 p.m. curfew as support. Bondy said Nikoubin broke curfew once in June to attend a job interview for a position she currently holds as a manager and fitness instructor in the DFW area. Additionally, Nikoubin lives under close guidance from her parents, one of whom is UTD electric engineering professor Tooraj Nikoubin.

“I want to express that I take full responsibility of my actions,” Nikoubin said. “I deeply regret that I have caused [the victim] pain and suffering. This incident itself is difficult for me to remember, and at the time I struggled to understand what was real and what was not ... My arrest was a true wake-up call and in some ways, I credit it to saving my life.”

Bondy said that Nikoubin was diagnosed with a multitude of mental disorders a couple of prior to the stabbing, including post-traumatic stress disorder following a sexual assault when she was 18, bipolar disorder, major depressive disorder

with severe psychotic symptoms and schizophrenia..

“Miss Nikoubin originally struggled to comply with her treatment regimen and she left home following her diagnosis to come to Las Vegas,” Bondy said. “She was not taking her prescribed medications at the time of the events.”

According to a medical opinion from Nika’s psychologist, Bruce Frumkin, Nika was in a psychotic state during the encounter with the victim. Frumkin believes that Nika gave law enforcement a false statement during her arrest and that the stabbing was not to avenge the death of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. “It was a product of a psychotic delusion and not reflective of her actual political beliefs,” Bondy said. “Dr. Frumkin’s opinion is also corroborated by law enforcement’s investigation where they found no evidence that Ms. Nikoubin had any ties to any terroristic organization.”

Leading up to the trial, Nikoubin sought clinical treatment and weekly therapy. Bondy said Nikoubin hasn’t entered a psychotic state since starting medication, and she must con-

tinue seeking psychiatric services during probation.

“Since the beginning, I’ve had the mindset that I wanted to whole situation to be concluded with,” the victim, Daniel Trebino, said. “I’ve chosen to forgive.”

Nikoubin said she withdrew from UTD in March after struggling to keep up with online classes and intends to continue her education at another four-year university this fall before applying for law school. Nikoubin also plans to continue with her musical career as she wants to “continue singing [to] inspire Persian women to participate in the arts,” and will release an autobiography about the aftermath of the stabbing.

“The incident in Las Vegas, which has been subject to misconceptions, was solely rooted in mental health struggles and bears no connection to any political motives or affiliations,” Nika said in a press release. “My autobiography is an opportunity to provide an authentic perspective beyond sensationalized narratives.”

their interest form up for the first few weeks of school.

“We just like to see how the first two weeks will go and then if we want to add some more,” Hernandez said. “We will be holding an audition for cheer and mascots again, and possibly the power dancers.”

CHEER
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

“Totally separate, yes. Just because they don’t fall under the NCAA umbrella, they have a totally separate budget,” Marin said.

Until the transition is finalized, the cheer team and

Temoc mascot are both still looking for members for the 2023–24 season, with cheer captains only being solidified as of Aug. 9 with criminology sophomore Olivia Martinez and biology junior Hannah Lowery. While applications ended Aug. 14, Hernandez expressed that they’ll be keeping



ANDRÉ AVERION | MERCURY STAFF

Taking home multiple team and individual accolades, including coveted silver and bronze bids, the Cheer team and Power Dancers kicked off the season with a display of exceptional skill and spirit.

SPORTS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ward to right now, and I really hope that the student body gets behind this.”

Marin said the university has been in discussion about joining Division II since 2018, and the push was put into effect after several schools left the American Southwestern Conference — the athletics conference UTD is in — earlier this summer. According to the NCAA Division III Manual, a league must have a minimum of seven active teams in order to remain viable for NCAA conference competitions, and the university projects that the ASC will fall underneath that limit over the next year.

After considering other DIII options and a tepid offer from a Division I conference, the university ultimately selected the LSC for its high level of competition and geographical proximity, as 13 of the 17 schools in the conference are located in Texas. LSC schools have hosted 77 national championships in the last 40 years, predominately in women’s basketball and volleyball. Just this past year, the LSC took home four NCAA national championship titles; in contrast, UTD has not claimed any NCAA championship titles under its 25 years in ASC.

“It’s like the stars aligned,” Marin said. “Their footprint is in Texas. When you look at missed class time, when you look at travel, when you look at pulling our students away from their academics, we want to be very intentional about finding a league that is majority Texas ... But they’re also in line with what we believe — our mission and values — with their academic success, with their high competitive nature, their community service, and their initiatives. To have a conference that is that strong across the board and will bring that type of competitiveness with these different schools on

our campus is exciting. You’re going to see that level of competition every night at one of our athletic events.”

The shift to the LSC also means that UTD will be the largest university in Division II while holding the highest academic standing of all schools in the LSC, surpassing former ASC rivals UT Tyler and Sul Ross State. “We have roughly a 90% graduation rate in athletics, and that’s something that we are going to protect through this process,” Marin said. “That’s at the core of who we are. At the core value of what we do is we graduate our kids. And that does not change with this transition. That will always be a high priority for us.”

Gene Fitch, vice president of Student Affairs, said funding for the DII transition will come from unrestricted funds: grants or donations that President Richard Benson chooses how to allocate. Benson estimates that the transition will cost an additional \$3 million annually for scholarships, staff hiring, and facility upgrades, which is around what the Athletics budget is right now.

“We’re not touching academic money,” Fitch said. “None of that is being impacted, and I don’t want our students to think that something’s being taken away from them.”

The added \$3 million in Athletics funding will go specifically towards hiring additional coaches for each team and support staff for strength and condition, athletic training, and academic support. Marin said only a set number of scholarships will be given out each academic year. For example, there are around 60 members on the baseball team, and nine of those positions would be eligible for scholarships.

“So we’re not talking about significant scholarship money here, and that nine is regulated by the NCAA,” Marin said.

“Some students aren’t going to be on scholarship. It’ll be up to our coaches’ discretion on which student athletes earn scholarships. It’s something you earn, it’s not automatic.”

Other changes between Division II and III include the timeline for playing sports. Division III rules dictate school sports may only be in session for 19 weeks out of the year. Marin said the Division II space will allow for coaches and staff to be with athletes throughout the full year, which will mean more competitions but also more opportunities for team connections.

“Recruiting could change a little bit too because now we’re looking at international recruiting,” Marin said. “When you look at Division II, for instance tennis and soccer, those become more of an international student base.”

Nothing in terms of conference play will change over the next year; UTD will still play for an ASC championship unless another school withdraws. After that, the university will be eligible to play for LSC conference championships and then NCAA national championships after the provisional period concludes.

“I hope that in the areas of the big things that nothing’s changed,” Marin said. “I hope we’re still as successful as we are. I hope that we still have that academic success that we have. We’re going to keep that up. Our level of competitiveness is still going to be high. The biggest change will be our footprint on this campus. You’re going to see a state-of-the-art track and upgraded fields. Our department’s going to take up a larger footprint ’cause we’ll have more people in it. We’re very proud of what we do and we’re proud to represent this institution. So I really hope the students come out and support us throughout this transition, because it’s a very exciting time.”

HEARTSTOPPER
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

clue into foreshadowing. The second season of “Heartstopper” delivered exactly what I wanted it to — a continuation of a wholesome story about two boys learning the ins and outs of being queer today and figuring out how

that fits within the bigger picture of their lives. Seeing this story felt fresh and new among existing media about queer people that often puts them in difficult, mentally grueling storylines. Sometimes a little dose of happiness is just what the doctor ordered, and “Heartstopper” delivers that. Their relationship dy-

namic is a joyful representation of young, queer love in a way that felt like a love letter to the LGBTQ+ community. Personally, I might have liked this season even more than the last because of how the dynamic between the characters has been established. Since all the episodes that have been released so far have been

nothing short of exceptional, the third season, which has already been confirmed, has some large shoes to fill. Endearing, loveable and maybe even heart-stopping, the newest season of “Heartstopper” is a perfect summer series to add to your Netflix watch list.

KIDNEY
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release the intracellular particles to all the cells. What we discovered is that there is no vesicle formed inside of the cell. The broad impact of our research [is that] — because it's a new phenomenon we discovered — I think in [the] future we will explore how this tubular organelle actuation process changes with the disease progression.”

According to Huang, the path to the discovery was not straightforward, as he faced multiple challenges including the shift from being a chemist to being a biomedical researcher and distinguishing the team’s research from phenomena that had already been reported. However, he and his team were able to collaborate with UT Southwestern researchers and work among themselves to advance their research.

“I think because we are chemists, although we know how to synthesize nanoparticles, we don't know ... how to apply these particles to tackle challenges in the biomedical field,” Yu

said. “We have collaborators in UT Southwestern like Dr. Jer-Tsong Hsieh in the urology department... [and] Dr. Qi Cai from the pathology department [who] taught us how to read tissue pathology. We discuss with them about the current questions, the most significant challenges in the biomedical field and also we learn from them how to do the biomedical research.”

Yu said that the team will continue to work on their research to unravel the mechanism at a molecular level and assist kidney healthcare. She also added that undergraduate researchers have helped them tremendously over the years, with their initial projects beginning in 2017.

“Our group has been an established group at UTD for 15 years,” Yu said. “We have been working with many undergraduate researchers ... [and] some of them also became graduate students and got their Ph.D. from our lab. We really appreciate their efforts and we are also looking for more undergraduate students who share the same passion and also an open mindset and a hardworking attitude to work with us in [the] future.”

UTD BASEBALL ALUMNUS VISITS WHITE HOUSE

ANDRÉ AVERION
Mercury Staff

Isaiah Swann, a UTD baseball alumnus and NCAA DIII Board of Governors Representative was invited to the White House on June 12 to celebrate College Athletics Day.

ISAIAH SWANN

and many other NCAA officials made a trip to the nation’s capital for an annual tradition set in 1865 by President Andrew Jackson. For the first time in American history, all three NCAA divisions were welcomed at the event,

including Swann in part of his unique role as the 2023 NCAA DIII Board of Governors representative. The 2020 neuroscience alumnus offers a student perspective for the Board of Governors and aids in various DIII related matters such as branding and mental health.

“It was kind of a surreal experience in many ways to be that close to the White House [and] to Vice President Harris, and it was really just great to hear her talk, to hear President Baker talk and to hear Logan Eggleston talk from UT volleyball,” Swann said. “It was a great experience overall. I’m really grateful for it and I know that the student athletes really enjoyed it as well.”

Swann recounts the event as a chance to meet and greet various athletes, coaches and NCAA professionals. It was an honor highlighted through the address presented by NCAA president Charlie Baker and Vice President Kamala Harris.

“On the White House lawn, the

student athletes themselves got to meet Vice President Harris and the first gentleman of the United States, but we did not,” Swann said. “We just talked to student athletes and some different university presidents and athletic directors.”

Swann played men’s baseball for the UTD Comets between 2017 and 2020 and was one of the most recognized baseball players in his conference starting his freshman year. His standout career would continue through his sophomore year, but an early-season injury ended his junior year playability, which would then be cut short in his senior year by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, during his time as a student, he was also a part of the university’s and the NCAA Division III Student-Athlete Advisory Committees, as well as the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports.

Today, Swann is enrolled at the University of Virginia Medical School, pursuing both his M.D. and Ph.D. in the field of neuroimmunology. However, he is excited at the news that UTD will be moving into Division II at the LoneStar Conference and cannot wait to see where the next generation of baseball players will go.

“Obviously, I loved my Division III experience, and I had a wonderful time, and it gave me so much. From that perspective, I am a little sad that other student athletes won’t have that kind of same experience; but at the same time, they’ll still have a great experience moving to the Lone Star Conference,” Swann said. “Coming with that transition, it’s going to be really great for the student athletes who are coming in and who are staying. I’m very interested to see what happens, but overall, I think it’s a really great move and I trust our athletic director.”

SAG
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ize how much weight this strike holds. Especially since it’s happening simultaneously to the Writers Guild of America’s strike over similar streaming-era wage concerns, an entire industry seems to be coming together to fight for what is right, which is inspiring to see.

As someone who has been involved in various writing projects, from summer work to writing for The Mercury, I cannot stress the importance of fair compensation enough. It is often frustrating and exhausting to produce work, and I cannot imagine doing that full time in addition to a lack of compensation. The streaming services that are currently pushing back on the requests of actors and writers make me question the morality of such successful corporations. With the amount of revenue they are constantly raking in and the constant increases

in subscription prices, it seems almost cruel to deny paychecks to artists. Though being far removed from the industry may make it seem like this strike is simply disruptive, looking deeper makes me realize that it is exactly the point. These workers have pushed so hard for compensation changes, but no one seemed to listen. Stopping their work entirely was the only way to show how much their work is valued. No AI can replace the emotions a writer imbues into the script or that the actor enhances their role with. Acting and writing may not be a highly demanded career such as doctors or engineers, but that does not mean that the work does not carry weight. Their work is important and valuable — art is an integral part of our society, and always has been. Everyone deserves to be able to meet their basic needs through their chosen career path, but the current state of residual checks denies that

right to millions. Furthermore, this strike brings up the larger idea of what computerization and automation means for different industries. Amongst the talks of negotiations, many have brought up the topic of replacing writers with advanced AI technology. This seems like a dumpster fire waiting to happen. Good movies and series exist when the material connects deeply with the audience, whether that connection be a moment of laughter or one of heartfelt understanding. Those moments are derived from experiences of the writers that sit in rooms and passionately craft stories for audiences to consume. Without that genuine emotion behind each word, it simply seems that the quality of entertainment will inevitably deteriorate. As much as I think interrogating ChatGPT is hilarious, I do not want it to write my next favorite romantic comedy for I fear that I will

end up watching a bad parody of “Wall-E” with two robots in love. As a viewer, I want to see the people who make my favorite shows compensated and as a writer I want to see those who I look up to continue to carve paths and make strides.

As exciting and interesting as it is to feel like I am living through history, it is equally as terrifying to think of the possibility of failed negotiations. With Hollywood on hold and streaming services hesitant to comply with SAG-AFTRA requests, it seems that the situation is at a standstill until someone finally gives. I do not know how long the negotiations might take or what they will hold for the future of entertainment, but I do know that no amount of grief over my anticipated releases being pushed back will measure up to the amount of empathy I feel for the members of the union fighting for livable wages.

ACTIVITES
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

than your GPA. They are looking for transferable skills, personality, and potential. When employers consider students for internships while in college or full-time positions after graduation, they think of you as an investment. In my experience, employers are more likely to invest in students already involved on campus. Employers consider involved students significantly more hireable and career-ready than their uninvolved peers. This is neither chance nor coincidence. Campus involvement is also how you can build what clinical psychologist Meg Jay calls Weak Ties—“people we have met or are connected to somehow but do not currently know well.” These Weak Ties are professors, administrators, peers, guest speakers...etc. The strength of Weak Ties, Jay argues, comes from their ability to give us access to something fresh; Weak Ties provide us with access to new jobs, information, apartments, opportunities, and ideas. My first college internship and full-time job after graduation came from the Weak Ties I developed through campus organizations.

At its core, campus involvement is community building. Unfortunately, the poor mental health of university students has become a low-hanging punchline. We cannot continue treating poor mental health as a rite of passage for university students. The scores of news stories and online articles illustrating—often at length—the rampant rates of depression and anxiety among college students hang as a dark cloud, draping a shadow of pessimism over our

conversations about mental health. It is, therefore, critical to consider the positive impact of campus communities on students’ mental health. I am not a mental health professional. Therefore, I only speak from personal experience when I say that my community on campus and professional mental health helped carry me across the finish line. Luckily, the Student Counseling Center provides mental health resources and services in a safe, affirming, and non-judgmental environment for all UTD students.

Academic success, personal and professional development, and mental well-being are the pillars of a meaningful college experience. There are over 300 registered student organizations on our campus for a reason. Whatever your interests, there is a space for you on campus. If you are interested in becoming an advocate for your peers, there is Student Government. If you are interested in research, UTD offers countless research opportunities for undergraduate students. If you are interested in expressing your culture, join a student organization like the African Student Association or the Indian Cultural Association. If you are a gamer, try out for the Esports team.

Take ownership of your college experience. Stop by the tables handing out free t-shirts, sign up for an intermural sport, explore the campus, and explore the city. You’re paying to be here; you might as well make the most of it. Now, allow me to oversimplify for dramatic effect; there are two types of college students, those who participate and those who do not. Which one will you be?

PARKING
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

veals that we are stuck in a loop — people feel obligated to take the highway, so they spend on gas and registration fees, which only increases the amount of money Texas can spend on building even more highways. It feels unfair seeing other countries, even other U.S. cities, with their own well-designed train or subway systems, while we are forced to drive just to pick up milk for the week.

Circling back to UTD, the convenience that comes with traveling highways attracts thousands of commuter students to our campus. With current average gas prices in Texas sitting at \$3.49 per gallon, less than \$7 a day for a round trip isn’t nearly as bad as paying over \$3,000 a semester to live in a dorm or apartment. But if you consider the experiences that come with commuting — long walks from the parking lot, unexpected weather,

and pollution from car emissions — it starts to feel like you made a poor decision.

UTD’s parking costs, which are actually less expensive than UT Arlington and UNT, are only a result of Texas’ mess of highway systems and car dependency. Our campus is suffering from a smaller scale loop of what’s happening with TxDOT. Tuition fees and parking costs go to the Parking and Transportation Department, which utilizes the money for maintenance and projects — and takes away affordable parking. However, just as Texans are forced to drive everywhere, UTD commuters have no choice but to pay high costs for poor parking experiences.

Of course, we can’t just get rid of driving in the Dallas area. Only about 2% of TxDOT’s budget goes to other modes of transportation, so the high-speed rail system we all dream of isn’t coming anytime soon. And UTD’s commuter population will continue to thrive as long as highways exist.

For now, Parking and Transportation at UTD must do better with the services they offer. Due to debt accumulation from building lots and structures, I can somewhat understand why fees are increasing. I acknowledge that UTD itself can’t do much to fight highway dependency in the state. But there are many options to make parking and commuting, in general, a more pleasant experience for students and staff alike. Establishing a free cab system for all students (not just the accessible Comet Cabs available for only those unable to walk) from the furthest parking lots to the center of campus is the most feasible solution for now. It might be difficult to keep such a system organized due to the high magnitude of students who drive, which is why remote parking and transportation to campus should be an option as well. For example, students could park in a lot that is further away from campus, while a bus picks them up from the lot at set intervals to drop them off at the

center of campus. There will be a new DART station at UTD coming in 2026, but like most other DART trains, it will connect Plano and surrounding cities to downtown Dallas. Students commute to UTD from as far as Fort Worth; DART isn’t something we can all rely on, since the travel times can be significantly longer than just driving.

I sound like a hypocrite — criticizing UTD parking yet proposing ways to keep using it, blaming Texas’ car dependency yet driving to school and everywhere else. But that is where the tragedy lies. Unless rapid changes in government representation occur, common citizens like me don’t have much choice when it comes to transportation. I still have hope that years into the future, sustainable transportation can become a reality across the country, but for now, it is UTD’s duty to improve the parking experience for its tens of thousands of students.



JASON SADHANANDH | MERCURY STAFF



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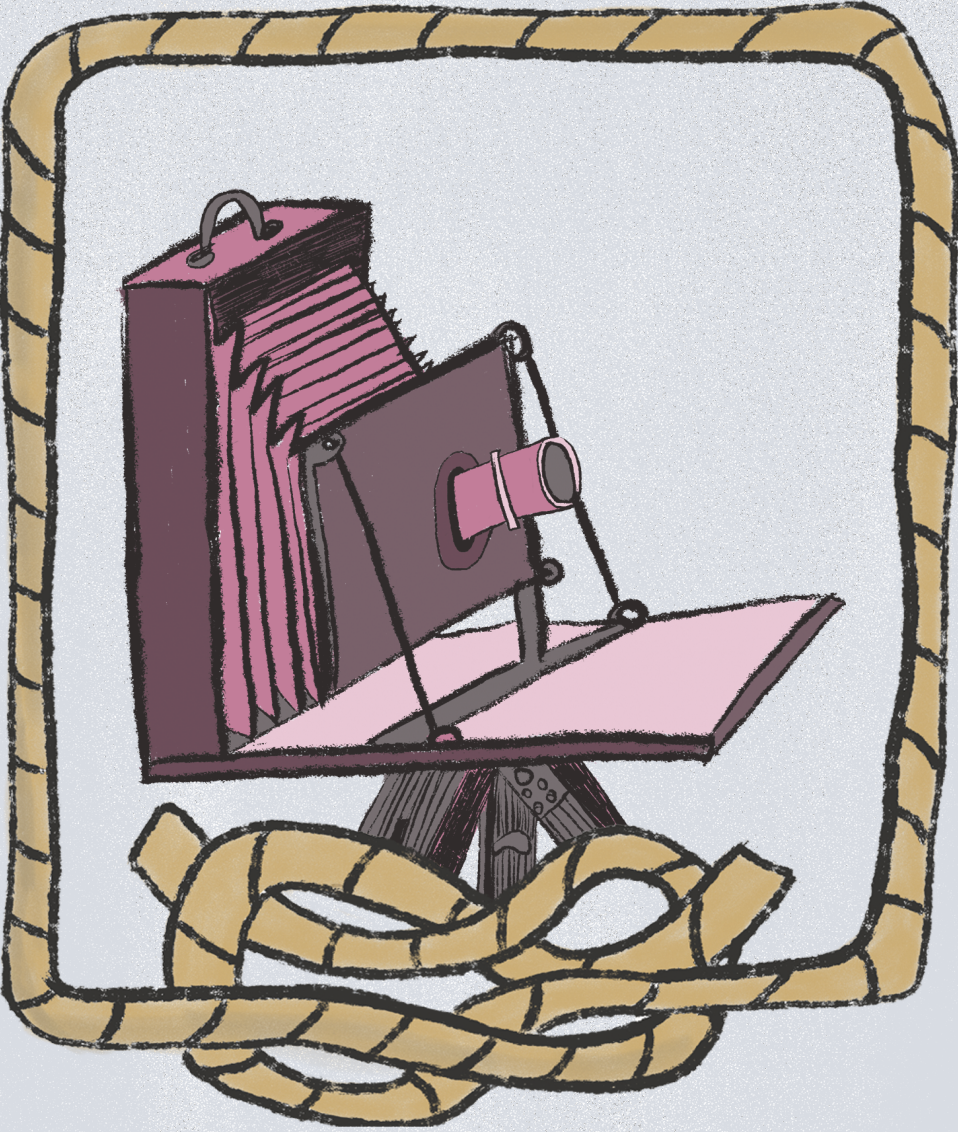


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